

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 ACDA-05 SY-05 USSS-00 OPR-02 A-01

PER-01 FBO-02 /081 W

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P 240655Z JUL 75

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3465

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO PRIORITY

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON PRIORITY

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC PRIORITY

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN PRIORITY

COMIDEASTFOR PRIORITY

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA PRIORITY

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0633

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS ET

SUBJECT: TENSIONS INCREASE IN ASMARA

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: TENSE SILENCE HAS FALLEN OVER ASMARA AS  
RESULT OF TUESDAY'S MILITARY ACTIONS IN NEARBY VILLAGE AND  
REPORTED EPMG TROOP REPRISAL RAID EARLY WEDNESDAY MORNING  
IN NORTHER SUBURBS. IN ADDITION TO THESE TANGIBLE SOURCES  
OF FEAR, SCARCITY OF DOWNTOWN TRAFFIC DUE TO EPMG CLOSURE  
OF GAS STATIONS AND RANDOM SEIZURE OF BICYCLES AND HORSES  
TEND TO ADD TO EERIE ATMOSPHERE. SUCH EPMG-INITIATED  
REPRESSION CAN ONLY MAKE GAP BETWEEN ETHIOPIANS AND ERITREANS  
THAT MUCH WIDER.

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2. TUESDAY AFTERNOON'S BOMBING AND STRAFING OF TSADA CHRISTIAN,

12 KM WEST OF ASMARA, FOLLOWED IN EARLY EVENING BY MECHANIZED SWEEP OF SAME AREA, PROVIDED INTIMIDATING AUDIO SPECTACLE FOR ASMARA RESIDENTS. THIS ACTION, WHICH IS WIDELY BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN STAGED FOR VISITING PMAC CHAIRMAN TEFERI BANTI, WAS PRELUDE TO WEDNESDAY'S PRE-DAWN TERROR RAID OF NORTHERN SUBURBS BY EPMG TROOPS. REPORTS OF CIVILIAN DEATHS IN THIS RAID RANGE UP TO 30 "MUSLIMS" MURDERED. IT NOT AT ALL CERTAIN THAT ELF/PLF PLAYED ANY ROLE AT ALL IN THESE NOISY MILITARY SPECTACLES.

3. TENSIONS AND FEARS, FUELED BY RAMPAGING RUMORS, HAVE CREATED A NOTICEABLE PALL OVER AN ALREADY VERY SUBDUED ASMARA. IN ADDITION TO DIRECT ACTIONS OF MILITARY IS CONTINUED CLOSURE OF GAS STATIONS, RANDOM SEIZURE OF BICYCLES AND HORSES, AND HARRASSMENT AT NUMEROUS AD HOC ROADBLOCKS IN ALLEGED EFFORT TO RESTRICT MOBILITY OF POTENTIAL ELF/PLF TROUBLEMAKERS DURING TEFERI BANTI'S VISIT (HE IS THOUGHT TO HAVE DEPARTED ASMARA EARLY WEDNESDAY). FEARS ALSO SPURRED BY SOUNDS OF BOMBING HEARD EARLY WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON REPORTEDLY IN SAME GENERAL AREA AS TUESDAY'S ACTION. ADDING TO GENERAL GLOOM WAS CESSATION OF WATER SERVICE IN ALL ASMARA SINCE TUESDAY EVENING, ALLEGEDLY RESULT OF WATERMAIN BREAK.

4. IN CIRCUIT OF TOWN AT 4:30 PM WEDNESDAY CONGEN OFFICERS OBSERVED SHUTTERED STORES, STREETS DEVOID OF BICYCLES AND HORSES, AND WORKERS HURRYING HOME FULL THREE HOURS BEFORE CURFEW. THIS IN MARKED CONTRAST TO USUALLY BUSTLING AFTERNOON COMMERCIAL AND SOCIAL ACTIVITY.

5. COMMENT: PRESENT BEHAVIOR EPMG TROOPS IN AND AROUND ASMARA AS RUTHLESS OCCUPATION ARMY IN SUBJECTED TERRITORY CAN ONLY WIDEN ALREADY GREAT GAP BETWEEN ERITREAN MASSES AND EPMG, PROVOKE RETALIATION, AND RENDER ANY REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION THAT MUCH MORE DIFFICULT.  
SHERRY

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